

What is claimed is:

1. A method for delivery of video electronic mail from a sender client device to a receiver client device over a communications network, comprising the steps of:
 - generating a video file at the sender client device;
 - streaming the video file to a video server and storing the video file on the video server until the video file is accessed by the receiver client device;
 - sending an electronic mail notification of the video file to the receiver client device; and
 - streaming the video file from the video server storage in response to a request from the receiver client device.
2. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 1 wherein the step of generating a video file comprises the acts of:
 - providing a video mail message window with controls for recording and playback of video and audio content;
 - recording video and audio content and storing the video and audio content in a standard format at the sender client device;
 - converting the video and audio content to a compressed streaming format video file; and
 - inserting a link to the compressed video file in the video mail message window.

3. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 2 wherein the step of generating a video file further comprises the act of adding a text message to the video mail message window.
4. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 1 wherein the step of streaming and storing the video file on the video server comprises the acts of:
 - transmitting the video file over the communications network to the video server;
 - receiving the video file from the sender client device;
 - verifying the integrity of the video file and testing the video file for virus contamination; and
 - storing the video file in a database at the video server.
5. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 1 wherein the step of sending an electronic mail notification comprises the act of transmitting an electronic mail content of the video mail message with an inserted link to an associated video file to a mail server of a communications network service provider.
6. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 1 wherein the step of streaming the video file from the video file storage comprises the acts of:
 - receiving a request for the video file from the receiver client device through a communications network service provider;
 - verifying that the receiver client device is capable of receiving the video file;
 - transmitting the video file to the receiver client device through the

communications network service provider; and
displaying the video file in a video message display window at the receiver client
device.

7. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 6 wherein the act of transmitting the video file to the receiver client device comprises the acts of sending the video file in packets over the communications network to a buffer in the receiver client device.
8. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 6 wherein the act of displaying the video file comprises the acts of :
 - launching a video player at the receiver client device; and
 - sending the contents of the buffer continuously to the video player.
9. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 2 wherein the compressed streaming file format is Advanced Streaming Format (ASF).
10. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 2 wherein the standard format is Audio Video Interleave (AVI) format.
11. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 2 wherein the step of inserting a link comprises adding a video icon representing the video file in the video mail message window.

12. The method for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 1 wherein the video file is deleted from the video server storage after a predetermined period of time.
13. A computer readable medium containing a computer program product operable on a sender client device for delivery of video electronic mail to a receiver client device over a communications network, the computer program product comprising:
- program instructions that generate a video file at the sender client device;
 - program instructions that stream the video file to a video server for storage until the video file is accessed by the receiver client device; and
 - program instructions that send an electronic mail notification of the video file to the receiver client device.
14. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 13 wherein the program instructions that generate a video file comprise:
- program instructions that provide a video mail message window with controls for recording and playback of video and audio content;
 - program instructions that enable recording of video and audio content and storing of the video and audio content in a standard format;
 - program instructions that convert the video and audio content to a compressed streaming format video file; and
 - program instructions that insert a link to the compressed video file in the video mail message window.

15. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 14 wherein the program instructions that generate a video file further comprise program instructions that enable an addition of a text message to the video mail message window.
16. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 1 wherein the program instructions that stream the video file for storage on the video server comprise program instructions that enable transmission of the video file over the communications network to the video server.
17. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 13 wherein the program instructions that send an electronic mail notification comprise program instructions that enable transmission of an electronic mail content of the video mail message with an inserted link to an associated video file to a mail server of a communications network service provider.
18. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 14 wherein the compressed streaming file format is Advanced Streaming Format (ASF).
19. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 14 wherein the standard format is Audio Video Interleave (AVI) format.

20. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 14 wherein the program instructions for inserting a link comprise program instructions that add a video icon representing the video file in the video mail message window.

21. A computer readable medium containing a computer program product operable on a video server for delivery of video electronic mail to a receiver client device over a communications network, the computer program product comprising:

program instructions that enable receiving of the video file from the sender client device;

program instructions that verify the integrity of the video file and test the video file for virus contamination; and

program instructions that store the video file in a database at the video server; and

program instructions that stream the video file from the video server database in response to a request from the receiver client device.

22. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 21 wherein the program instructions that streaming the video file comprise:

program instructions that receive a request for the video file from the receiver client device through a communications network service provider;

program instructions that verify the receiver client device is capable of receiving the video file;

program instructions that enable transmission of the video file to the receiver client device through the communications network service provider.

23. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 22 wherein the program instructions that enable transmission of the video file to the receiver client device comprise program instructions that send the video file in packets over the communications network to a buffer in the receiver client device.
24. The computer program product for delivery of video electronic mail of claim 21 further comprising program instructions that delete the video file from the video server storage after a predetermined period of time.
25. A video mail server system for the delivery of video electronic mail to at least one receiver client device over a communications network, comprising:
- a database for storing a plurality of video mail files for access by an intended receiver client device;
 - a store and forward server for receiving the plurality of video mail files from a plurality of sender client devices and storing the plurality of video mail files in the database; and
 - a video mail application program operable on the store and forward server to handle requests for specific video mail delivery from the at least one receiver client device.

26. The video mail server system for the delivery of video electronic mail of claim 25 wherein the video mail application program further comprises:

- a first verification component for verifying the integrity of each video mail file received from a sender client device;
- a second verification component for determining that the intended receiver client device is capable of receiving the specific video mail; and
- a transmission component for sending the specific video mail to the intended receiver client device over the communications network.

27. A client device for the sending of video electronic mail to at least one receiver client device via a video server over a communications network, comprising:

- a processor for controlling the generation of video mail messages;
- a video camera and audio microphones connected to the processor for recording of a specific audio and video mail message in a standard format;
- compression software operable on the processor for reformatting and compression of the audio and video mail message in a video mail file;
- a local storage device for temporary storage of the specific video mail; and
- a video mail user interface window for providing controls for recording and playback of video and audio content in the video mail message.

28. The client device for the sending of video electronic mail of claim 27 further comprising a video mail application program operable on the processor for inserting a video mail message link on the video mail user interface window, for adding a text message to the video mail message, and for transmitting the video content of the video mail message to the video server.
29. The sender client device for the sending of video electronic mail of claim 28 wherein the video mail application program transmits the electronic mail content of the video mail message, and the video mail message link to a mail server of a communications network services provider for delivery to the at least one receiver client device.

0977216-020501